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Keeping it Clean on Mulholland Ridge Trail

By Cathy Dausman



Ted and Carol Gamble hold the tools of their trade for cleaning the Mulholland Ridge Trail. Photo Cathy Dausman

Ridge land to a developer, who in turn sold the property to at least two other developers. "They really didn't do anything to it [the roadway and property]," Gamble said, because the elevation was tough to build on. "If trees fell [across the road] nobody cared," Gamble said. "Eventually, the upper [roadway] portion became impassible."

The last developer to own the property deeded 500 acres along the ridgeline in perpetuity to the Town of Moraga and the town acquired the road. It took several hundred thousand dollars to repair and repave the road and trim back the brush. Now, Moraga only sweeps the site about twice a year, Gamble said, because of the cost.

"No one really knows that he does this and no one ever thanks him except my husband," said Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kathe Nelson, although Gamble himself said he was thanked by a former town manager and that drivers on the route sometimes give him a thumbs-up.

"In a town so dependent on volunteerism, there are still unsung heroes," Nelson said.

It's not unusual that Ted and Carol Gamble take an active interest in the Mulholland Ridge Trail; after all, the couple still lives in the house they built on the Moraga side in 1970. "It's a wonderful canopy [of trees] and a scenic hike," Ted Gamble said of the area. And it's a place where people love to walk their dogs. But for the past 40 years, the Gambles have given more than lip service to their surroundings - they clean the roadway from Laird Drive to the top of the ridge on a regular basis on their own and without pay.

Once a month in winter, and once a week in warmer weather, Gamble takes his gas weed eater or commercial power blower along the route to clean up. His wife follows with a trash bag, filling it with remnants of fast food meals, bottles, cans, and other less savory items.

"I do it somewhat selfishly," Gamble said. He explained that clearing the route of pine needles is a "safety issue" for drivers, bikers and pedestrians; and he likes the exercise he gets while looking at nature.

People are "entitled to a nice scenic walkway," he explained.

According to Gamble, developer Donald Rheem built the roadway and had it maintained so that he could drive from his Orinda side home into Rheem Center for daily coffee and donuts at Scotty's.

"He drove a big old Buick," Gamble recalled. After Rheem died, his estate sold the Mulholland

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